



THE INDIAN PORTRAIT-II

Sacred Journey of Tilkayat
Govardhanlalji (1862 - 1934), Nathdwara



Anil Relia graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University, Baroda in 1978. In the same year, he started a small screen printing unit in Ahmedabad. His innovations in screen printing immediately caught the attention of many advertising agencies, renowned institutions and the corporate sector, all angling to use his skills for innovative print production assignments.



Anil Relia's innate knowledge of art and his experimentation with the screen printing media raised this medium to great heights, which led him into the field of serigraphy. Renowned artists like M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza, K. G. Subramanyan, Madhvi and Manu Parekh, Manjit Bawa, Jogen Chowdhury, Amit Ambalal and many more have worked with him in his graphic studio. Taking time out of his studio to follow his other passion of collecting art, he has acquired a mammoth collection. A lot of which is from various families and friends who had discarded their ancestral paintings as they found them old fashioned, out of style or no longer needed them. He regularly visits scrap shops and junk dealers in urban and rural areas, to find such works.

Anil Relia's love of art from childhood made him one of the most prominent art collectors of India. For his passion, Anil Relia has been honoured with many awards including an award from the President of India.

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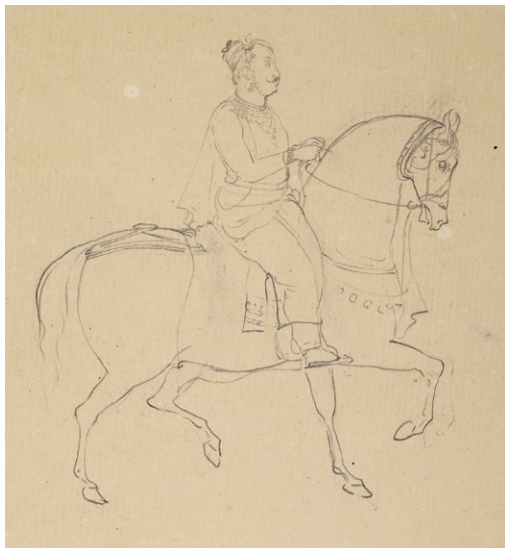
Sacred Journey of Tilkayat
Govardhanlalji (1862 - 1934), Nathdwara

From the collection of
Anil Relia

Exhibition
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Amdavad ni Gufa, Ahmedabad

This collection nor the exhibition
would not have been possible without
the support, guidance, and inspiration of
Rakshabhabhi and Amitbhai.





Equestrian portrait of Govardhanlalji
circa 1900
Drawing on paper
8 x 5.75 in. (20.3 x 14.6 cm)

Foreword

Paintings of the Nathdwara School occupy a special place in Indian art. The artists used to paint with a sense of deep devotion which was reflected in their work.

My collection of Nathdwara paintings started with an encounter on a trip to that city with a shopkeeper selling *pichwais* and paintings. One particular pencil sketch of a marriage procession of the *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji's son, Damodarlal caught my attention. The shopkeeper quoted a higher than usual price for this drawing. I still went ahead and bought it. I had it framed and put it up on the wall of my house. When the renowned scholar of Nathdwara paintings, Ms. Tryna Lyons saw it she was truly intrigued by this drawing and later on confirmed that it had been done by none other than the eminent artist Ghasiram Hardev Sharma. In such fortuitous circumstances began my collection of Nathdwara portraits.

I started adding to my collection various paintings as well as portraits, especially those of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji who is considered the most illustrious of the *Tilkayats*.

It has been our endeavor to catalogue the portraits in chronological order as per the age of Govardhanlalji. Many of the paintings have not been dated or signed but we have tried to arrange them in order.

We have also tried to research and attribute as many paintings as possible to the artist. Any error in this regard is unintentional and regretted.



Map of Srinathji Temple Nathdwara
20th Century
Opaque water colour and gold on paper
20.5 in. x 26 in. (52.1 cm x 66 cm)

To comprehend the significance of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji (1862-1934), one has to first understand the glory of Nathdwara.

Nathdwara is a holy town in Rajasthan, famous for its temple of Lord Krishna built in the 17th century, on the spot chosen by Shrinathji himself. Even its name '*Gateway to Shrinathji*' signifies its importance to the Vaishnava sect.

Shrinathji symbolizes a form of Lord Krishna, when he lifted the Govardhan mountain. In the image, the lord is revealed with his left hand raised and the right hand, folded and resting at the waist, with a large diamond placed beneath the lips. The deity at the temple is treated like a living image and is attended with daily normal functions, like bathing, dressing, meals called "*Prasad*" and the resting times at regular intervals. Devotees throng to the shrine in large numbers during Janmashtami and other festivals, like Holi and Diwali.

Along with the history of Nathdwara comes the antecedents of the *Tilkayats*. The first *Tilkayat* was Shri Vallabhacharya who devoted his life to the deity and the upliftment of the devotees. His descendants continue to follow in his footsteps.

The Vallabh '*kul*' patronized painting, poetry, music, costumes, jewellery, floral arrangement etc. and made it an essential part of worship. Each successful heir of the *Tilkayat* brought an advancement in his own special manner.

Goswami *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji's period is considered the most important in Nathdwara's history. Govardhanlalji was appointed *Tilkayat* soon after his father *Tilkayat* Girdharji (1843-1903) departed Nathdwara in 1877. At the tender age of sixteen, he undertook tasks allotted to him by virtue of his position, with competence and authority. He possessed a high intellect, was considered wise, magnanimous and was highly revered.

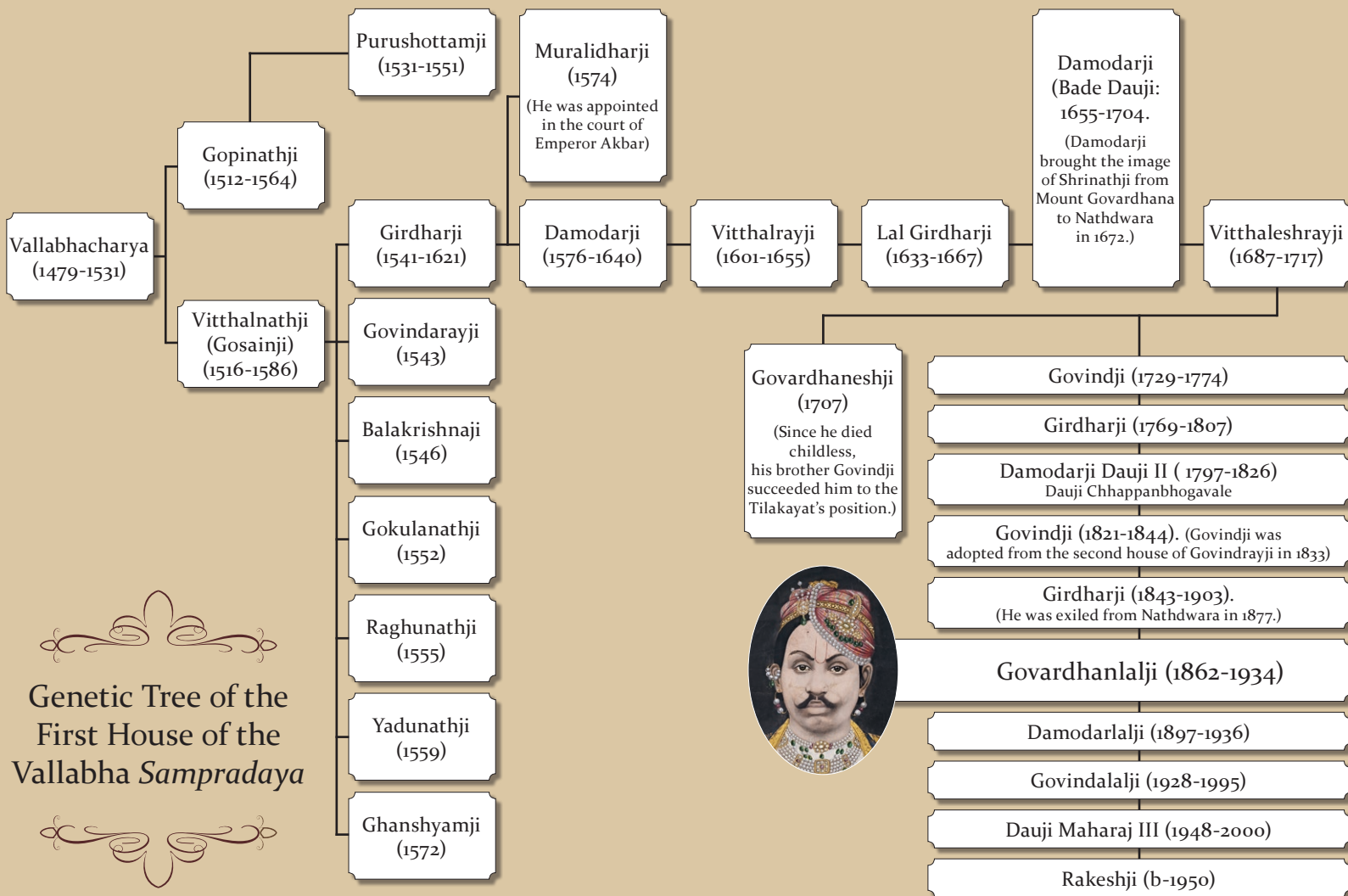
The court of the *Tilkayat* at Nathdwara during his time resembled that of a ruling prince. It boasted of nine talented masters, like the proverbial '*Navratnas*' of Emperor Akbar's court, each highly accomplished in his particular field. He toured the length and breadth of India to propagate the principles of Pushtimarga. His preachings drew huge crowds of devotees as well as honours from pundits and scholars.

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji ensured that the town of Nathdwara benefited from the large number of devotees thronging the temple. He developed many gardens and built ponds, thus, enhancing its beauty and transforming it into a tourist spot. Moreover, he built a hospital, a Sanskrit school, a high school for boys and girls, a library, a bridge over the Banas river as well as constructed many new buildings, several new roads and a step-well. He strengthened the army by expanding the cavalry and erecting new sentry posts. The judicial powers withdrawn from the former *Tilkayat* by the Maharana of Udaipur were restored back to Govardhanlalji making him both the spiritual as well as the temporal ruler of Nathdwara.

Govardhanlalji's love for the arts was proverbial. He took a keen interest in art, often spending a considerable amount of time with artists and rewarding them with gifts and cash. *Pichwais* on various subjects were painted on his instructions and exquisite *Manoraths* were commissioned. Master artists such as Sukhdev and Ghashiram were patronized by him, who in turn, guided other artists. At his request an illustrative manuscript on the '*Bhagavat Puran*' containing 960 paintings were commissioned, which took nearly thirty-five years to complete. Govardhanlalji, himself, was the subject of many paintings. Artist Ghashiram was often seen sketching the *Tilkayat* during his discourses and giving formal '*darshan*' to his devotees. Painting at Nathdwara reached its zenith during *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji's reign.

Govardhanlalji's enthusiasm knew no bounds when his son Damodarlal (1897-1936) came of age. He adopted the four-day Rajasthani spring festival of Gangaur for celebration in the temple. Govardhanlalji had high hopes for his son, whom he felt would add luster to the sect. He was highly disappointed to discover Damodarlal's love for a singer named Hansa, who left Nathdwara for Nainital to be with her. The last years of Govardhanlalji's life were spent in sorrow and distress due to his son's behaviour. Worn out by grief and exertion, Govardhanlalji breathed his last in Simla on 21st September 1934.

The demise of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji slowed down the development of Nathdwara. Missing the personal patronage of the *Tilkayat*, many artists migrated elsewhere in search of work. It is believed that some even changed their professions. However, Nathdwara still remains the only surviving centre for miniature paintings. Sadly though, it is no longer as intricate as it was during the time of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji.



**Tilkayat Girdharji (1843-1903) with his son
Govardhanlalji (1862-1934) on tour**

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1865

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
10.5 x 13.5 in. (26.7 x 34.3 cm.)

Tilkayats would often undertake tours of the city and adjoining areas on festive occasions or on specific events, where there would be a welcome ceremony. This is a painting depicting one such tour of an adjoining area undertaken by the reigning *Tilkayat* of that time, Girdharji alongwith his son Govardhanlalji who later became *Tilkayat* himself. Girdharji is shown here riding a blue horse, ahead of a young Govardhanlalji riding a brown horse. Walking besides them are their attendants. Both Girdharji and Govardhanlalji have halos over their heads signifying their divinity.



Riding on an elephant during Vijaydashmi Procession behind father Tilkayat Girdharji

Attributed to Parasramji (active 1840-1880)
Mewar
circa 1865

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
15.75 x 22.5 in. (40 x 57.2 cm.)

Every year on Vijaydashmi, the *Tilkayat* would be part of a grand procession which would culminate in the symbolic burning of Ravana's effigy. Such events have been pictorially depicted by various artists.

This painting shows *Tilkayat* Girdharji atop the lead elephant and Govardhanlalji, still a child, on an elephant behind him. Preceding them are different platoons of soldiers in their employ; including a platoon of Europeans with bayonets and rifles. Along with riders on horses, camels and elephants, bearers carried empty palanquins. This is because elephants were able to travel only to a part of the way. On the final stretch of the procession, the people sitting on elephants would be transferred onto palanquins. One important aspect of the Vijaydashmi procession was the march-past of arms and cannons. All these elements of the procession have been vividly captured by the artist in this painting.

This painting is attributed to Parasramji who was head of the Art Department in the court of Maharana Swaroop Singh of Mewar from 1842 to 1861.





Left and right - Detail of the previous painting



Procession for the festival of Chunri Gangaur

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1865

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
11.75 x 15.75 in. (29.8 x 40 cm.)

Gangaur is a very important festival in Rajasthan. It is the celebration of spring, harvest as well as marital fidelity. This festival is celebrated with pomp and splendour in Nathdwara, especially by womenfolk who worship Gauri, the consort of Lord Shiva. People add *chunris* to their attire in the form of turbans, etc. Hence, the name of the festival is *Chunri* Gangaur.

This painting is of the period when Govardhanlalji's father, Girdharji was the *Tilkayat*. Girdharji was a bold man of independent nature. During the 1857 uprising, he took the side of the freedom fighters against the British rule and even sheltered Tatya Tope. He was totally against the British domination of India and employed a detachment of European troops. They are seen in this painting leading the way wearing their red uniforms and carrying guns. A young Govardhanlalji is shown riding behind them alongwith his attendants while the reigning *Tilkayat* Girdharji is shown with his attendants.

Inscription on the back: *Lalji Gordhanlalji Nathdwara, Tiket Girdhariji Maharaj Gangaur sawari ka chitra.*



Tilkayat Girdharji performing Aarti with his son on Sharad Purnima day

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1870

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13 x 9.5 in. (33 x 24.1 cm.)

Sharad Purnima is one of the most celebrated festivals in the calendar of the Vallabha sampradaya which falls on the full moon of the autumnal month of October 'Ashwin Shuka 15'.

This is a typical Nathdwara composition in which the shrine is decorated for the Sharad Purnima festival. Shrinathji is adorned in his swirling skirt *kachchani*, saffron pyjamas-*suthan*, blackish-blue upper garment and bejeweled crown. His saffron *dupatta* flies in gay abandon. The backdrop is that of the night sky with a full moon at the centre. *Tilkayat* Girdharji is shown offering the *aarti* while an adolescent Govardhanlalji is shown holding a fan.



Sitting on a Victorian chair and décor are characteristic of the period

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1875

Natural pigments, silver and gold on cloth
35 x 29.75 in. (88.9 x 75.6 cm.)

This is a portrait of the young Govardhanlalji just after he became *Tilkayat* in 1877. At the tender age of sixteen his father was forced to abandon Nathdwara due to pressure from the British as he was sympathetic to the cause of India's freedom and had sheltered the freedom fighter Tatya Tope.

In this portrait, Govardhanlalji is seated on a chair with his arm resting on an intricately carved European style table, on which stands a ceramic vase holding roses. His divinity is signified with a halo over his head. The setting of this painting is that of a balcony with a green coloured drape. There is a prevalent pattern of roses throughout and the border of the *pichwai* has a rose pattern, like the carpet.

Normally, artists of Nathdwara depict *gopis* holding fans or *Vraj Yatra* or major events in Lord Krishna's life are painted on *pichwais* - which are then used as backdrops in the temple or at shrines of devotees. But in this painting the artist has portrayed the young Govardhanlalji on a traditional cloth painting using natural pigment made from various stones, plants and flowers mixed with gum. Usually this style is used for painting *Pichwais* in Nathdwara.



Portrait in a Princely Attire

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)

Nathdwara

circa 1885

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

18 x 14 in. (45.7 x 35.5 cm.)

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji was a descendent of Vallabha, the founder of the religious community known as *Pushtimarg*. As a direct descendent of Vallabha, whose wooden sandals are still worshiped in the sanctum sanctorum of the Haveli of Shrinathji, Govardhanlalji became *Tilkayat* in 1877 and is revered till today.

In this portrait, Govardhanlalji is shown in princely in attire as well as demeanor. He is wearing a bejeweled turban and fine clothes. His earrings are made of pearls. He is shown wearing necklaces of pearls as well as precious stones like rubies and emeralds. He was young in age when this portrait was painted.

This portrait has been painted by renowned artist Ghasiram Hardev Sharma, who was one of the most prolific artists of Nathdwara. After being engaged in painting murals for the Raja of Jhalawar, Ghasiram became chief or mukhiya of the painting department. Ghasiram was also proficient in oil paintings as well as photography. *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji was a major patron of Ghasiram. His portraits of the *Tilkayat* were in great demand amongst the pilgrims of Nathdwara.



Lithograph after a British photographers portrait

by Unknown European Artist
circa 1885

Lithograph with Inscription at Bottom
13 x 9.5 in. (33 x 21.1 cm.)

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji was a direct descendent of Vallabhacharyaji. Govardhanlalji succeeded his father as *Tilkayat* in 1877.

After the invention of photography, many European artists travelled across India capturing in their lens not just the country's superb landscapes and exquisite monuments but also prominent personalities. Lithographs were then made from these photographs. Lithography is a planographic printing process that makes use of the immiscibility of grease and water. In the lithographic process, ink is applied to a grease-treated image on the flat printing surface; nonimage or blank areas, which hold moisture and repel the lithographic ink. This inked surface is then printed directly on paper, by means of a special press.

As *Tilkayat*, Govardhanlalji was a leading persona during that period he was photographed extensively. Since his portraits were in great demand amongst the devotees of Nathdwara, lithographs made from his photographs became very popular as they were more cost effective than paintings.



Devotees worshipping in the Shrine of Shrinathji

Attributed to Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)

Nathdwara

circa 1890

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

13.25 x 10.5 in. (33.7 x 26.7 cm.)

The abode of Shrinathji at Nathdwara is a *haveli*, closely modeled on the royal palaces of Rajasthan. *Aarti* is performed every day. This painting captures one such *aarti* being performed by Govardhanlalji in the sanctum sanctorum wearing yellow attire. Another *goswami* wearing white attire is on the right and a group of devotees are shown sitting in *Manikotha* whereas many are standing in *Doltibari*. A man twirling a *jhapatyu* over his head is in the middle ensuring that the devotees don't crowd around the centre. At the bottom of the painting on both sides, devotees are shown prostrating themselves in devotion. Devotees stand below the archways of the *Doltibari* on the left side and below the archway on the right. Here Govardhanlalji's daughter is shown wearing a plumed head-dress. This painting is unique as it brings out the architectural perspective of the *Doltibari*, *Manikotha* and the sanctum sanctorum, whereas the devotees are depicted in the traditional style.



Sitting on a pink mattress in traditional style

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1890

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
11.75 x 8.5 in. (29.8 x 21.6 cm.)



Sitting on a chair in European manner

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1890

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
18 x 13 in. (45.7 x 33 cm.)



Sitting along with his children against large bolster

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1890

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13.25 x 10 in. (33.7 x 25.4 cm.)

On many festive occasions, *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji's children were dressed as Balkrishna and were part of ceremonies and processions.

They have been depicted as Balkrishna in many paintings. In this painting, the two children hold pride of place as each are seated on Govardhanlalji's lap. The *Tilkayat's* divinity is portrayed through the halo around his head whereas the children's exalted status comes through their fine clothes, jewellery and plumed head-dress. The setting is that of a room with many chandeliers. The *Tilkayat* is shown sitting on a traditional mattress which is spread on a carpet with a floral pattern. The *Tilkayat* is resting on a bolster. This painting brings out Govardhanlalji's love for his children.



Govardhanlalji venerating the infant Krishna as He is nursed by foster mother Yashoda

Attributed to Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)
Nathdwara
circa 1890

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
22.25 x 16.25 in. (56.5 x 41.3 cm.)

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji visualized Navneetpriyaji as a child Krishna and not a mere image of Krishna. The bond of Yashoda and Krishna epitomizes the mother-son love in Hindu mythology. Govardhanlalji had enormous veneration for this bond.

This painting attributed to Ghasiram depicts Yashoda nursing the infant Krishna. Govardhanlalji is shown holding rattles in his hands as he is seated along with another *Gossainji*. Toys of elephants and horses are placed on the carpet. A similar painting is on display at Nathdwara in Navneetpriyaji's temple.



Passing through palace while on Tour of Nathdwara

Attributed to Kundanlal Mistry (c.1860-c.1930)
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Oil on canvas
51 x 40 in. (129.5 x 101.6 cm.)

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji used to undertake tours of Nathdwara from time to time. This painting by Kundanlal (c.1860-c.1930) captures one such occasion. This painting is also unique as it differs from the normal style of painting by other artists from Nathdwara.

Kundanlal was the son of a traditional artist and attended the prestigious J. J. School of Arts in Bombay between 1886 and 1889. He was then employed by the Maharana of Udaipur. In 1893, he was sent to England by the Maharana to study at the Slade Fine Art School, making him one of the first group of Indians to study art in Europe. He returned to Udaipur in 1896. Elements of the European style are thus reflected in his paintings.

It is quite evident in this painting as well. It is an oil painting on canvas. *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji is shown sitting in a gold and silver *howdah* alongwith his fly-whisk attendant atop an elephant that has been adorned with gold jewellery and ridden by a *mahout*. The elephant has a magnificent head covering and a gold *tika* on its forehead. Necklaces of gold and silver adorn its neck while gold anklets jingle at its feet. The front end of its tusks have a gold caps. Riding on white horses besides the elephant are two important members of his entourage. Their importance can be gauged by the jewellery worn by them. The rest of the group are shown carrying banners. A palace is depicted in the background to show that the *Tilkayat* was on a tour of the city.



Multiple – An array of reverence

Govardhanlalji has been one of the most revered *Tilkayats* of all time. His enormous popularity amongst the devotees led to a huge in demand for his portraits which the devotees took back home to worship. The painters of Nathdwara painted these portraits in various poses and sizes. Each portrait would be valued based on its intricacy and quality of work. The prices ranged from the most economical, targeting the common man, to a substantial sum for the wealthy.

Today, we find such signed and unsigned paintings in the temple-rooms of homes where they are revered. These paintings range from the highly intricate, where attention was paid to the minutest of detail, to those that are typical, bold and associated with speedy work.





Khaka of Tilkayat Govardhanlalji

by Unknown Artist

Nathdwara

circa 1900

Ink on handmade paper

14 x 10.5 in. (35.6 x 26.7 cm.)

Khaka is a line drawing on paper in which tiny perforations are made using a needle. Whenever a copy of a particular painting has to be made the *khaka* is placed on paper and a muslin bag filled with fine charcoal powder is dusted over it, so that the impression percolates down to the paper. This gave an outline for the copy of the painting. This particular technique was adopted to make multiple copies of the same painting with minor changes in colour and other elements.

As seen in this drawing after multiple use of this thin paper, the *Khaka* has become crumpled.



Face Study

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Pencil and water colour on paper
28 x 21 in. (71.1 x 53.3 cm.)



Photographic Portrait

by Ghasiram Studio
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Silver gelatin print
7.75 x 5.5 in. (19.7 x 14 cm.)

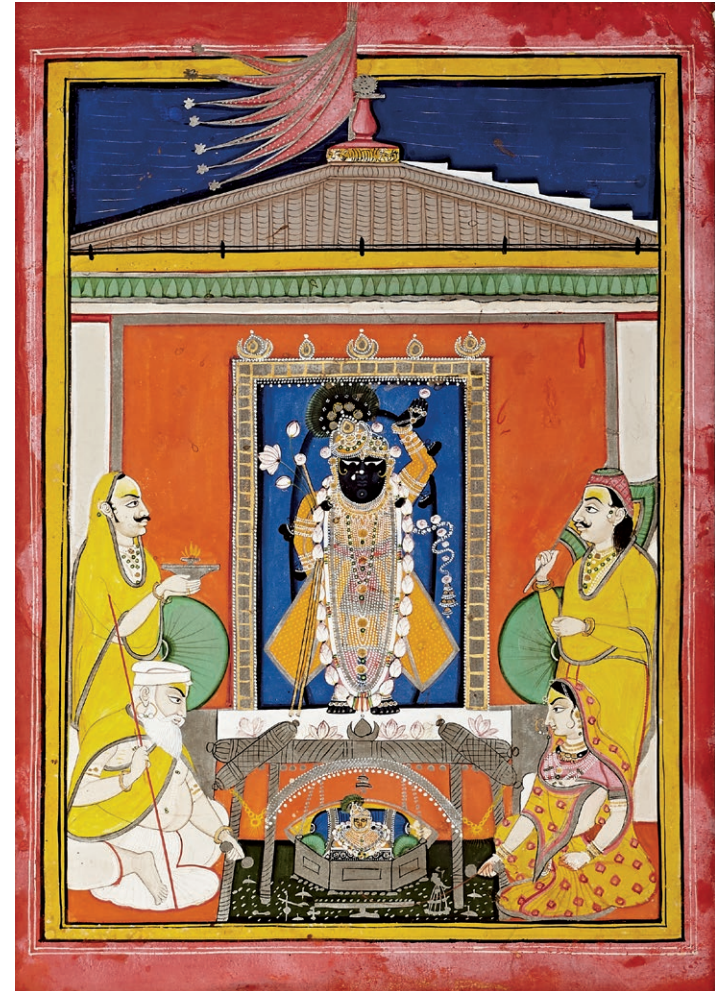


Celebration of Nand Mahotsav

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13.50 x 9.5 in. (34.3 x 24.1 cm.)

The Nand Mahotsav festival is celebrated on the day following *Janmashtami*, the birthday of Lord Krishna and commemorates the celebrations in the home of Nandraya and Yashoda, Lord Krishna's foster parents. Shrinathji, seen at the centre is dressed in a saffron coat and sports a turban replete with a plume of peacock feathers. A priest is dressed up as Nandraya with a white turban, a white *dhoti* and an *uparna*, holding a rattle in his hand. Another priest is dressed as Yashoda in a sari and shown rocking the new-born Navanitpriyaji in a cradle. Performing *aarti* on the left is Girdharji and on the right is Govardhanlalji holding a fan.



Celebration of Sapta Swarupa Annakutotsava with many Gossainjis

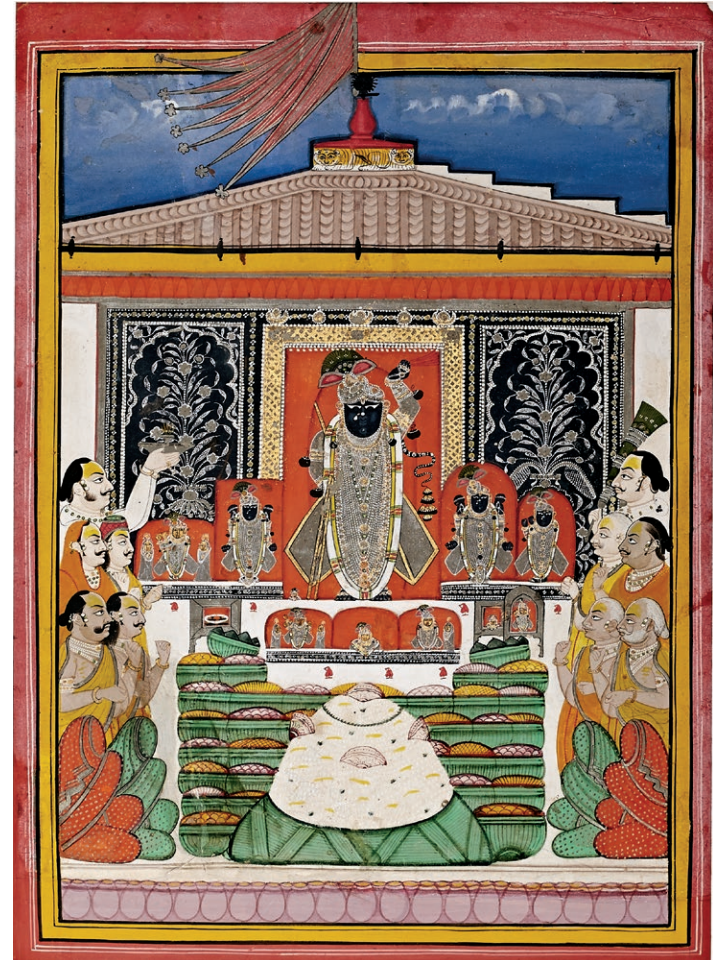
by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13 x 9.5 in. (33 x 24.1 cm.)

The festival of *Annakuta* commemorates the lifting of Mount Govardhan by Lord Krishna to protect the villagers of Vraja from the wrath of Lord Indra and the subsequent offering of rice & curd by the villagers of Vraja to Lord Krishna.

This painting depicts the notional gathering of the *sapta swarupas* in Nathdwara along with their *Gossainjis*. Here, Shrinathji and his *sapta swarupa*, flank the main image beside the embroidered “tree of life” where a huge mound of rice and curd representing Mount Govardhan are placed as four pieces of pink sweets adorn the four sides of the mound. Hampers of various types of food and sweets are piled in front of the deity in the true spirit of *Annakuta*.

Dauji II is depicted performing *aarti*. Girdharji and Govardhanlalji are also shown on the left. Several other *Gossainjis* witness the event. Women with their head covered sit cross-legged in the foreground.

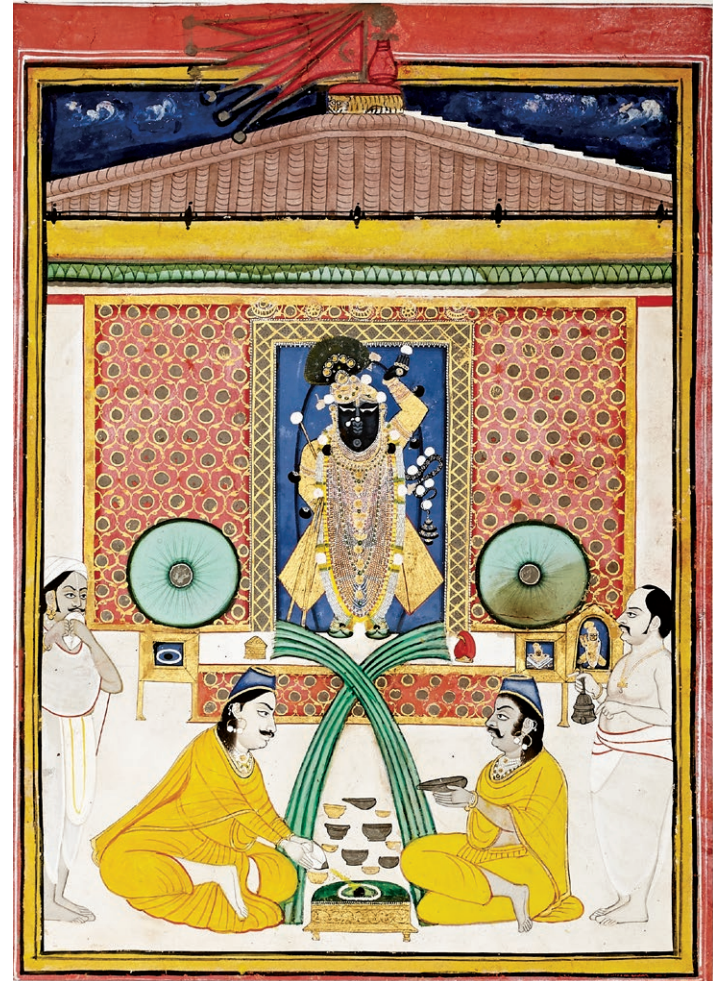


**Performing *Shaligram Puja* on the day of
Prabodhini Ekadesi (*Kartik Shukla 11*)**

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
12.75 x 9.25 in. (32.4 x 23.5 cm.)

Prabodhini Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the month of Kartika is commemorated as the day of the awakening of Lord Vishnu after four months of slumber. In the Doltibari, the *shaligram* is placed on a *sangamachi* under a *mandap* made with sugarcane. The *shaligram puja* celebrates the marriage of Lord Vishnu with Tulsi, the sacred basil plant. The *shaligram* is being bathed by *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji with *panchamrita*, a mixture comprising of ghee, honey, sugar, milk and curd as another Goswami holds a lamp, as a priest blows a conch while another rings a bell.



Performing Aarti on summer day, pichwai depicts mount Govardhan and Radha on the left of Srinathji

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)
Nathdwara
circa 1900

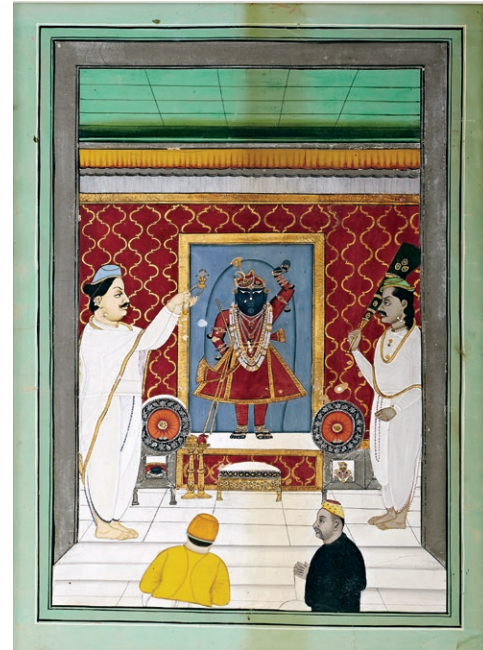
Opaque water colour and gold on paper
10.25 x 13.5 in. (26 X 34.3 cm.)



Performing Aarti of Srinathji, the priest on right holds a morchhala to protect from an evil eye

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque water colour and gold on paper
13 x 7.5 in. (44.4 x 33 cm.)



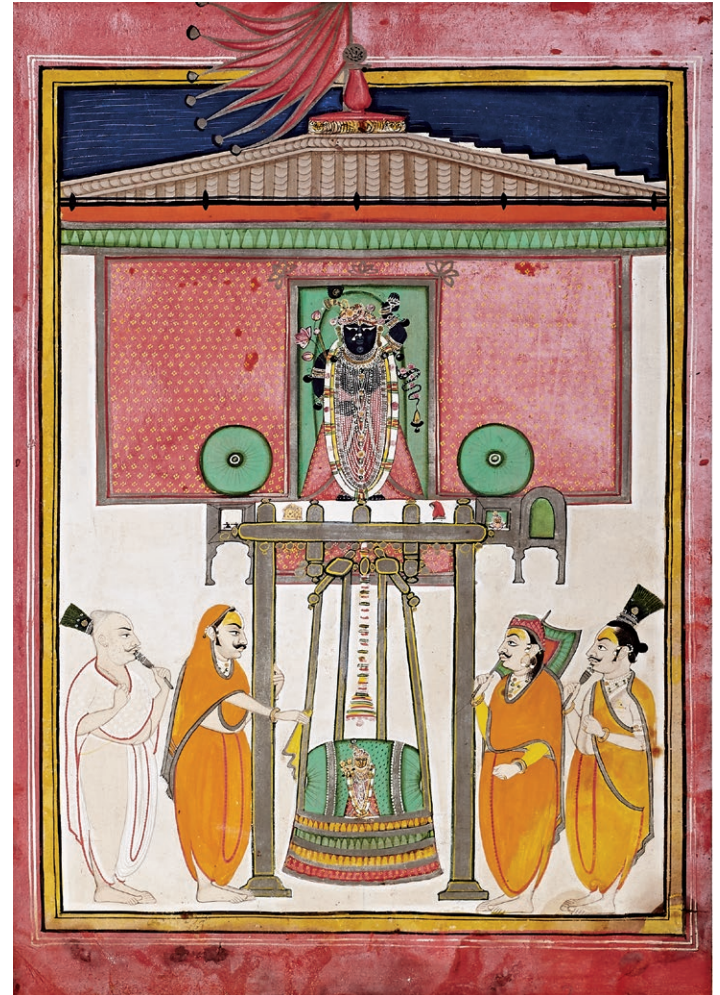
Shrinathji and Madanmohanji on Hindola

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13 x 9.5 in. (33 x 24.1 cm.)

In this painting, Shrinathji bears the *shringara* of a red *pichhoda*, an A-line long skirt and a *kulhe jod* on the *shrimastaka*- head turban with a peacock feather ornament as bolsters are kept on either side. The image of Madanmohanji is placed near Shrinathji.

The section below the *swarupa* of Shrinathji, Girdharji swings Madanmohanji on a *hindola* and Govardhanlalji is shown holding a fan. Behind both Girdharji and Govardhanlalji stands another *Gossainji* holding *morchhala*.



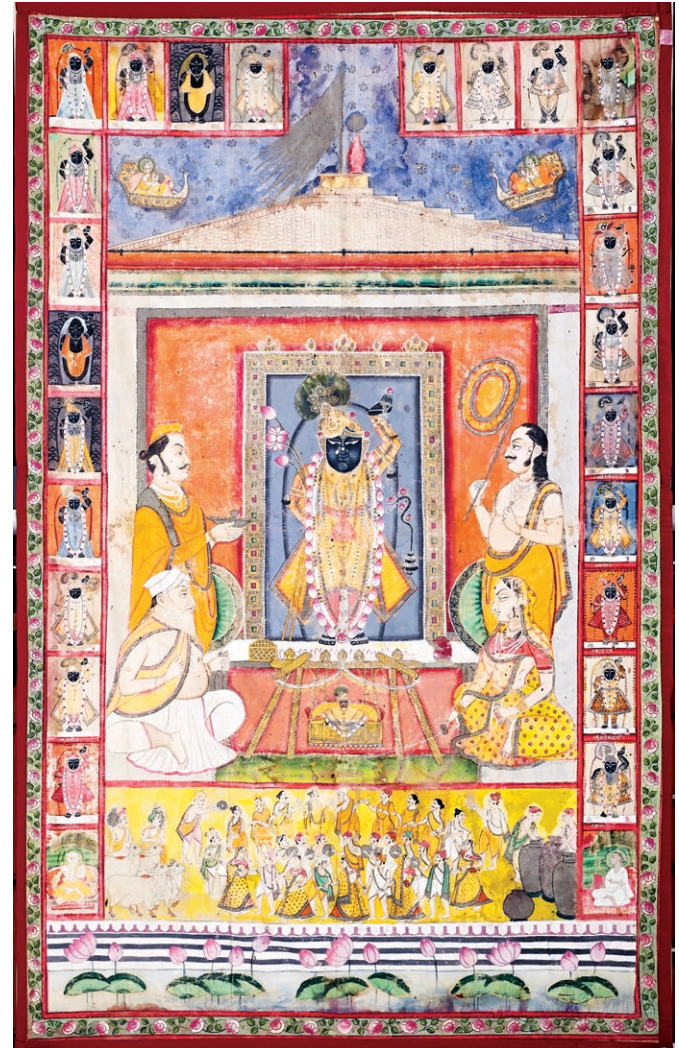
Pichwai for Nandmahotsav, Performing Aarti on the day following Janmastami

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Natural pigments, silver and gold on cloth
54.25 x 33.5 in. (137.8 x 85.1 cm.)

The Nandmahotsav festival is a re-enactment of the grand celebration held by Nanda for his foster son Krishna. During this celebration, villagers from Vraj danced in festive colours and doused each other with milk and curd.

The *pichwai* represents the joyous scene of celebration at the Nathdwara shrine with priests re-enacting the event. Shrinathji wears a saffron tight-fitting coat and wears a turban with seven peacock feathers as Govardhanlalji is shown performing the *aarti* as another *Gossainji* holds a fan. Nanda holds a rattle while Yashoda rocks the new-born Navnitpriyaji in a golden cradle. At the lower end of the *pichwai*, there are a group of dancers. The border frame depicts Shrinathji in his twenty-four shrinagaras with Vallabhacharyaji to his right and Vitthalnathji to the left in the lower panels.



Portrait in “Company style” with colonial settings

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
12.25 x 9.5 in. (31.1 x 21.1 cm)

Govardhanlalji's reign as *Tilkayat* is considered the golden age of Nathdwara when art flourished in numerous forms with experimentation of styles. One such different style is seen in this portrait in the “Company” style of painting which traces its influence to the British East India Company. The Britishers were in the habit of taking Indian art and artifacts as souvenirs when they returned back home to Britain. To cater to this demand, artists started amalgamating European décor and influences into their own paintings. This became known as the “Company” style.

Here, Govardhanlalji is shown sitting on a mattress laid out on a floral carpet. He is not wearing his princely clothes but is dressed in devotional attire with a skull cap on his head and holding a rosary bead bag. A maroon shawl is draped on his shoulders which signifies that this portrait was probably painted in winter. This portrait is painted, as if Govardhanlalji is seen from an open window. The window frame is seen in the foreground along with a pink curtain and potted plants on the window sill. Behind Govardhanlalji, a colonial style window can be seen in the background.



Sitting on a red velvet sofa like a Maharaja

by Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906)
circa 1900

Lithograph
Published by Ravi Varma press
29.25 x 20.75 in. (74.3 x 52.7 cm)

Just as Govardhanlalji is considered the most respected amongst *Tilkayats*, Raja Ravi Varma is known as the greatest painter in the history of Indian art. Raja Ravi Varma was born in an aristocratic family in the princely state of Travancore. At a young age he secured the patronage of the monarch and began formal training thereafter. His paintings are considered to be among the best examples of the fusion of Indian traditions with the techniques of European academic art. Raja Ravi Varma visited Udaipur in 1902 and there many artists of Nathdwara met him including Ghasiram and Kundanlal. He also painted *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji. Seeing the immense demand for the paintings of Govardhanlalji, amongst the pilgrims of Nathdwara, he went on to make lithographic prints of his paintings so as to make them affordable to the common man. These lithographs were printed in sizes 10" x 7"; 14" x 10"; 20" x 14"; 28" x 20" at the Ravi Varma Press and went on to become very popular.



Passing through temple site while riding on a horse and attendant following

by Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906)
circa 1900

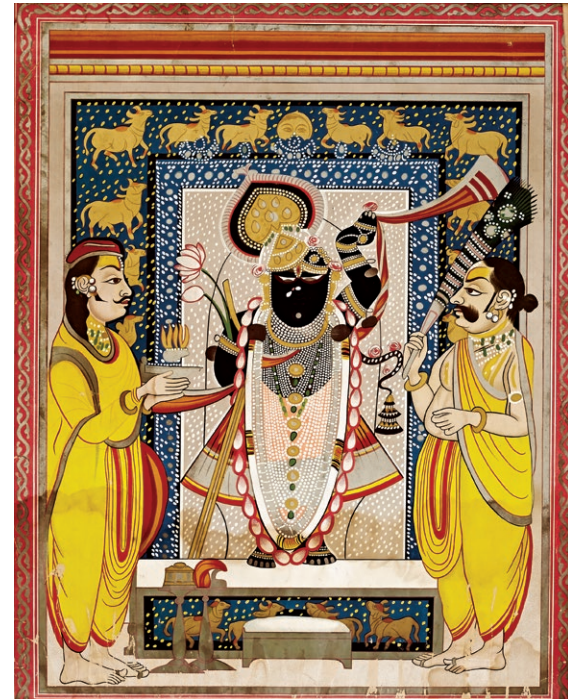
Lithograph
Published by Ravi Varma press
28 x 20 in (71.1 x 50.8 cm)



Performing Aarti of Shrinathji

by Unknown Indian Artist
circa 1910

Lithograph
Published by Ravi Varma press
30 x 23.50 in (76.2 x 59.7 cm)



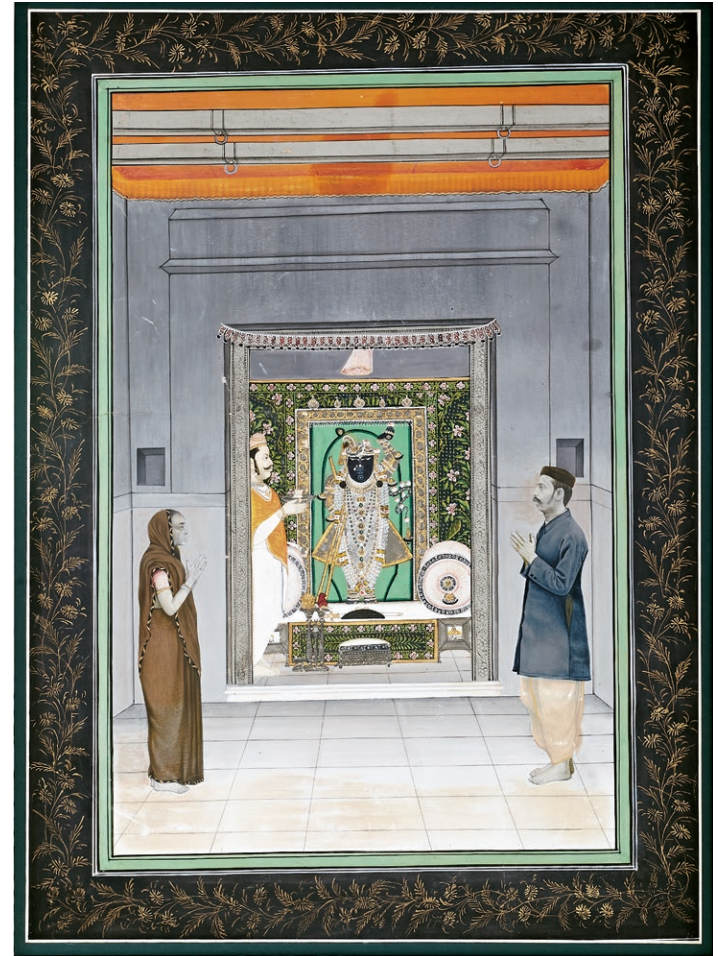
Manorath of Shrinathji on the Occasion of Dussehra

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)
Nathdwara
circa 1900

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
17.75 x 12.75 in. (45.1 x 32.4 cm.)

A *manorath* is performed to fulfil a long cherished desire and an innermost yearning to perform seva to the deity. A *Goswami* would adorn Shrinathji and make decorations by displaying suitable *pichwais*, flower arrangements and many other aesthetic elements. Special food delicacies are also prepared for a *manorath*. A *manorath* on the occasion of Dussehra is considered to be very auspicious.

The Dussehra festival celebrates the victory of Lord Ram over the demon king Ravana. To commemorate this victory, a sword & shield was placed in front of Shrinathji who is adorned with jewels. A *toran* at the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum highlights the auspicious occasion. Govardhanlalji is shown offering an *aarti* on behalf of devotees.



Marriage procession of son Damodarlalji

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)

Nathdwara

dated 1907

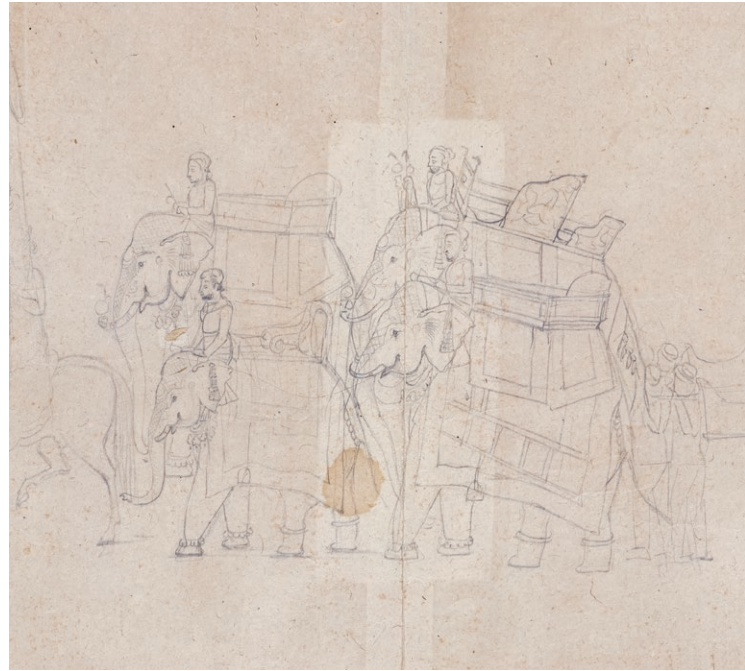
Drawing on paper

9.6 x 83 in. (24.4 x 210.8 cm.)



This is a large pencil sketch of the marriage procession of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji's son, Damodarlal in 1907 headed by equestrian drummers and a phalanx of caparisoned elephants who are followed by soldiers on horseback and a company of female devotees. Damodarlal and his bride are carried in a palanquin at the centre of the cavalcade. Preceding the mare, a group of men are headed by the towering figure of the groom's father, *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji and the guests of honour at the wedding. *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji, due to his stature, is depicted in great detail and shown standing tall, head and shoulders above the others.

Renowned artist Ghasiram Hardev Sharma painted this drawing at the time when he was chief or *mukhiya* of the art department of Nathdwara.



Performing Aarti on the day of Chunri Gangaur

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma (1868-1930)

Nathdwara

dated 1904

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

13.50 x 10.25 in. (34.3 x 26 cm.)

The festival of Gangaur lasting 16 days is celebrated with great pomp by the people of Nathdwara in the month of Chaitra. This festival is celebrated as Hari Gangaur where green is a predominant colour. For *Chunri* Gangaur all decorations and attires have a predominance of *chunris* and for Gulabi Gangaur pink is the predominant colour of the painting.

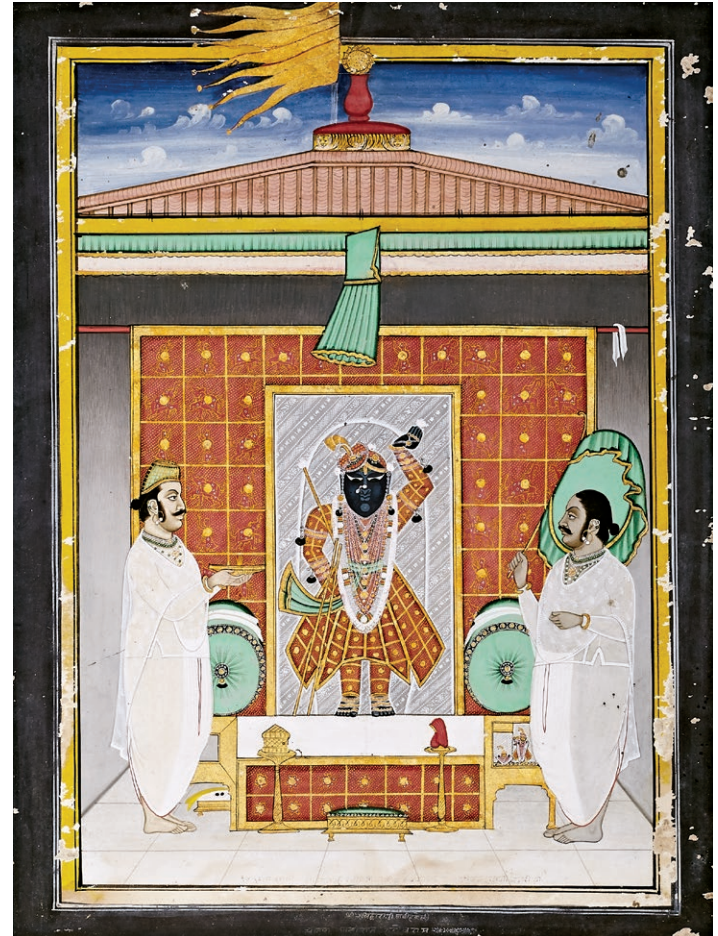
In this painting by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma, Shrinathji's attire is made from a red *chunri*. The backdrop is also of a *chunri*. Govardhanlalji is shown performing *aarti* while another Gossainji holds a fan. Inscribed at the bottom is

"1960 Chaitra Sudi 7. Tha. Lalji Khimji ni Vidhva Gangabai.

Haste Harjeevandas Bajaria

Chitera Ghasiram Hardev

Shrinath Dwaraji, Navi Haveli"



Sketchbook for study (Multiple pages)

by Unknown Artist

Nathdwara

dated 1909 – 1915

Pencil, Ink and Pasted Photographs on paper

27 leaves of handmade paper

9.5 x 6.75 in. (24.1 cm x 17.1 cm)

Artists study faces alongwith human anatomy before they start a work on a painting or *pichwai*. Conceptually behind every good painting lies a good sketch. The sense of spontaneity and expressiveness is found in the sketches and finds expression in the finished paintings. Sketches bear intimate records of the artist's hand and one can actually follow his creative process.

This sketch of Govardhanlalji is taken from a sketch book of an artist that also contains sketches of various other reputed *Gossainjis* like Kanakraiji from Mathura, Chimanlalji from Mumbai, Gopaldasji from Gokul, Balkrishnalalji from Ahmedabad and many others. Since, pilgrims came from different towns and demanded paintings of different *Gossainjis*, these, sketches acted as a reference point while painting the required personage. This particular sketch book also contains personal records of the artist such as orders taken for paintings as well as festive decorations and inscriptions.

One can see that this is a sketch of Govardhanlalji in a sitting posture on a European style chair holding a cane. His hand is resting on a similar table that has a vase with flowers and books. The face, for some reason, must have got smudged by the artist and hence, he has redrawn the face in another sketch to the left.



Full length portrait standing with cane

by Unknown Artist (after Ghasiram Sharma)

Nathdwara

circa 1910

Opaque watercolour on paper

21.25 x 11 in. (54 x 27.9 cm.)

Nathdwara was at its zenith during the tenure of Govardhanlalji as the *Tilkayat*. Several portraits of Govardhanlalji were very popular amongst the pilgrims. One such painting is this full figure of the *Tilkayat*.

This painting was done in the middle part of his tenure, as his moustache is grey and is holding a walking stick. Dressed in clothes that depict class and simplicity, Govardhanlalji exudes aristocracy and humility in this portrait.

A similar half length portrait wearing the same attire was painted by the renowned artist Ghasiram Hardev Sharma and holds pride of place in the collection of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.



Reference photograph
from which the painting was created



Performing Aarti of Shrinathji During Gangaur Festival

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1910

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
12.25 x 17.5 in. (31.1 x 44.4 cm.)

Gangaur is one of the most colourful and important festivals of Nathdwara and observed with great fervor by the womenfolk. This festival signifies the coming together of Lord Shiva and Gauri-Parvati.

In this painting, Shrinathji is adorned in a dress made from a *chunri*. In the backdrop is a *pichwai* depicting the celebration of Gangaur by Krishna and Radha. Women are shown performing *ghoomar*, a Rajasthani folk dance. Gangaur Ghat is depicted in the background and Govardhanlalji is shown performing *aarti*.



Shringar on a summer day

by Bitthaldas Sharma

Nathdwara

circa 1910

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

24 x 17.75 in. (61 x 45.1 cm.)

In summer the color scheme is light. Shrinathji is seen in garments made from jasmine buds. The white *pichwai* in the back seems to be in appliqué. The front room is filled with water. A tiny fountain cools the atmosphere with toy drains, turtles and real and artificial flowers in it. On the left, Govardhanlalji is shown performing an aarti with is young son Damodarlalji on the right, holding a fan.



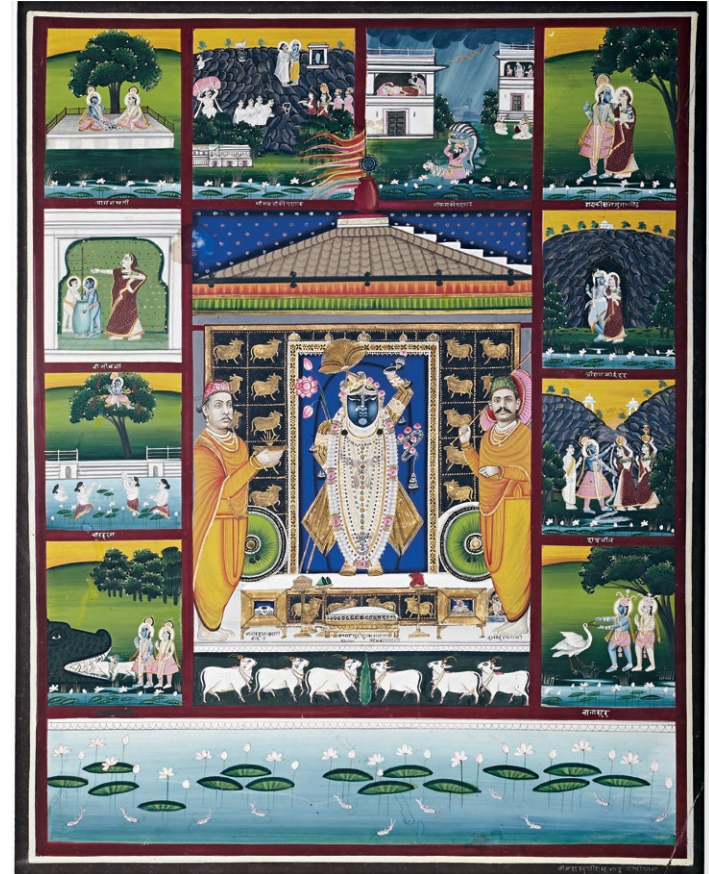
Shringar of Maghsar Sudi Purnima for Chappan Bhog with background of Krishna Leela

by Khubiram Bhai Gopilal
Nathdwara
circa 1920

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
25 x 20 in. (63.5 x 50.8 cm)

This painting by renowned painters Khubiram and Gopilal is a wonderful amalgamation of Krishna Leela along with the *aarti* conducted by Govardhanlalji. At the centre of the painting is the scene where *aarti* is performed by *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji standing on the left and his son Damodarlalji is on the right, holding a fan. The *pichwai* celebrates the occasion of Gopashtami. The bottom part of the border shows a pond full of lotus flowers and fishes. The border is depicted with different episodes of Krishna Leela with great detail and finesse.

Artists Khubiram and Gopilal were partners and had a shop in Nathdwara, where they served as middlemen for a large number of artists. They would generally have their name signed on whatever painting they would sell from their shop. They specialized in *pichwais*, *manorath* paintings, Krishna Leela scenes and portraits.



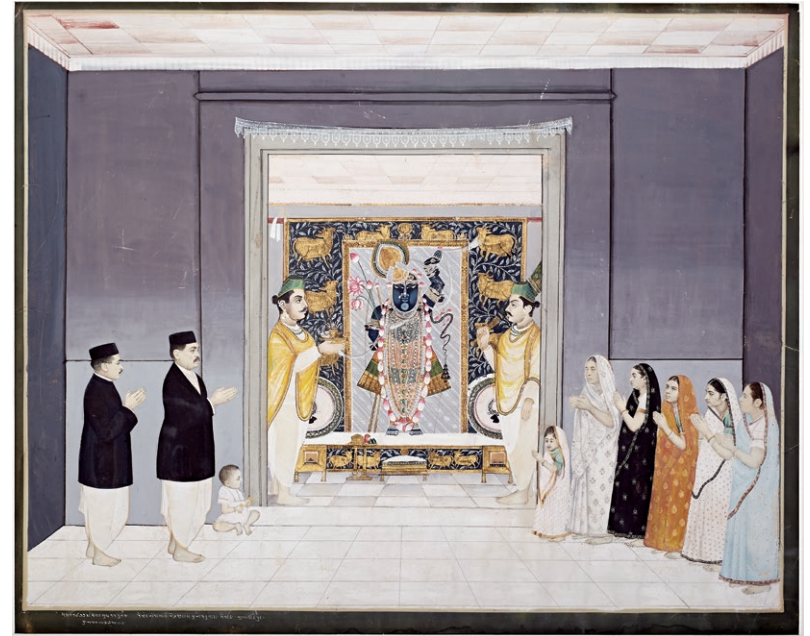
Manorath on the day of Maghsarsudi Purnima with Damodarlalji

by Nathalal Jaikrishnadas
Nathdwara
dated 1921

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
20 x 24 in. (50.8 x 61 cm.)

An auspicious day in the calendar of the Vallabha sampradaya is Maghsarsudi Purnima. Here, an entire family belonging to the Bhatia community from the erstwhile Bombay state which today comprises of Gujarat and Maharashtra, is shown performing a *manorath*. The family is segregated by gender and includes different generations. Shrinathji is adorned with his ceremonial *kachchani* and crown. The *pichwai* depicts large cows in gold brocade or embroidery on a black background.

This painting was painted by Nathalal Jaykrishnadas, a direct descendent of master artist, Pitha, who settled in Nathdwara in 1705.



Manorath of Shrinathji in Chandan ka Bungala

by Unknown Artist

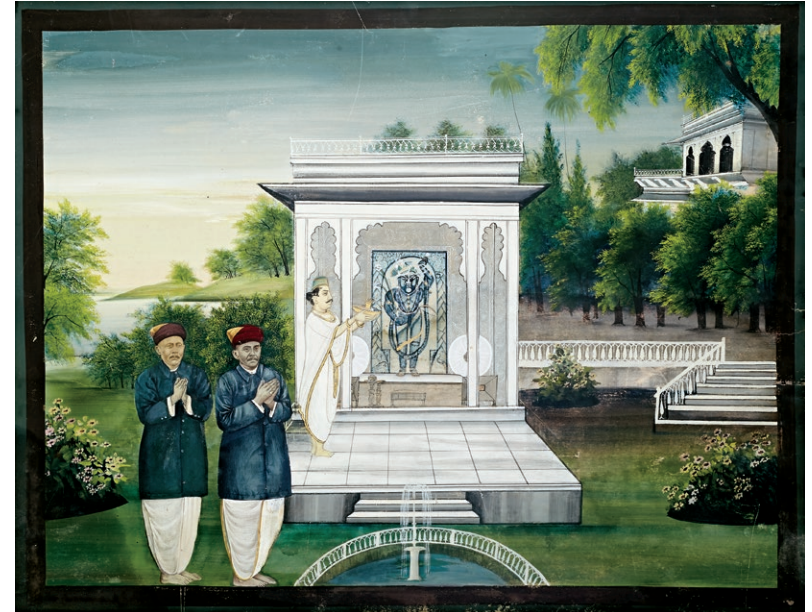
Nathdwara

circa 1920

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
17.9 x 22 in. (45.5 x 55.9 cm.)

Painting commemorates a *manorath* of Shrinathji in a chandan ka bungala or silver pavilion. It shows Govardhanlalji performing *aarti* to Shrinathji. The setting is that of a silver pavilion in a European style landscape. Two devotees wearing dhoti, dagla and topi stand in worship with folded hands.

Devotees of Pushti Marg perform *manorath* in fulfilment of a vow. To capture this event they get a painting done. Generally, many paintings using the same images were made. After the faces were changed by taking a photograph of the devotee, which was printed on thin paper and pasted on the painting. They use techniques like outlining and shading, the photographic images of the faces which blended perfectly with the paintings.



Manorath on a special festival day

by Ambalal Khemraj

Nathdwara

circa 1925

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

23.5 x 17.75 in. (59.7 x 45.1 cm)

In this painting of a *manorath*, the entire family is depicted in profile. The *pichwai* at the back depicts golden cows on a black background. Govardhanlalji is shown performing *aarti* with Damodarlalji holding the fan.

This is a painting by Ambalal Khemraj of a *manorath* on the occasion of Gopashtami. Ambalal was of the Jangir-Palaicha clan of artists and was a direct descendent of Pitha who settled in Nathdwara in 1705. Unlike other artists who would travel to different towns for commissioned works, Ambalal followed his father's tradition of staying only in Nathdwara and working from there. His brother, Jairam and son, Radhakrishna, were acclaimed artists in their own right. Ambalal was also a photographer and a group photo of various artists and persons of Nathdwara clicked by him have been published in "The Artists of Nathdwara", a book by Tryna Lyons.



Seated on European-style chair with hand resting on Table

by Champalal Gaur (c.1875-c.1930)

Nathdwara

circa 1920

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

21.5 x 16 in. (54.6 x 40.6 cm)

Tilkayat Govardhanlalji was always a popular subject with the artists of Nathdwara. Champalal Gaur (c.1875-c.1930) belonged to the Jatoyia clan of the *adi-gaur* artists was one such acclaimed painter. His grandfather lived and painted in Nathdwara whereas his father was employed in Bombay at the Balkrishanlal temple. His childhood years were divided between Bombay and Nathdwara and his art was honed by studying under his paternal uncle who was himself an accomplished artist. On his father's demise, he took over as artist-in-residence at the Balkrishanlal temple at a very young age.

This grisaille portrait of Govardhanlalji by Champalal Gaur was done in the then fashionable “photographic-studio” style wherein the subject is photographed in a studio and then painted. This style was very popular in those days since the subject did not have to spend days posing for the artist.

Govardhanlalji is shown in full finery, sitting in a chair resting his hand on a table with the backdrop of a palace.



Oval bust Portrait in Grisaille style

by Champalal Gaur (c.1875-c.1930)

Nathdwara

circa 1920

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

23 x 18 in. (58.4 x 44.7 cm)

Portraits of *Tilkayat* Govardhanlalji were extremely popular amongst the pilgrims who came to pay obeisance to Shrinathji. The artist, Champalal Gaur acceded to the rising demand of painting a portrait of Govardhanlalji in grisaille style from his celebrated full length portrait (see previous page). Only minor changes were done in the portrait by accentuating the details of clothes, jewellery and facial features.



Reference photograph
from which this and previous page painting were created



Sitting in a prayer, Holding a Rosary Bag / prayer beads

by Unknown Artist
Nathdwara
circa 1930

Opaque watercolour on paper
14.5 x 11.5 in. (36.8 x 29.2 cm.)

There are several paintings of Govardhanlalji wherein he is shown going about his religious duties or portraits that highlight his exalted stature. There are very few portraits that depict his spiritual frame of mind. This is one such portrait based on a photograph by Laxmilal Jagannath Sharma of Ghasiram Studio.

Here, Govardhanlalji is shown, meditating holding a rosary bag in which rosary beads are dropped while saying a prayer. His head-dress is not his usual bejeweled turban but a simple cap as worn by ordinary priests. He is shown sitting on a mattress with his back against a bolster. In front of him are *bajoth*, *kalash*, *tarbhanu*, *aachamani* and *pavalu*, all used in prayer. It is this spiritual nature of Govardhanlalji that acts as beacon for the followers of Pushti Marg even today.



Reference photograph
from which this painting was created



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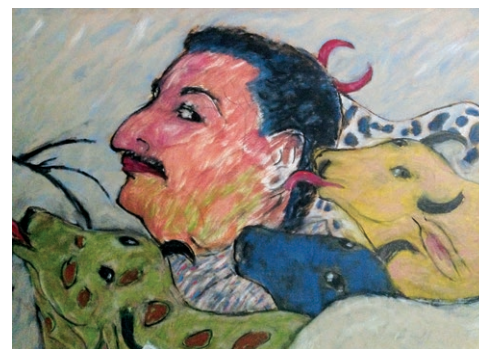


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“Work is worship.

The artists of Nathdwara truly embodied this adage. They believed that every painting of theirs was not a mere task to be completed but an act of devotion. I believe that every painting in this collection is thus the artist's faith transferred onto paper.”

- Anil Relia



Satirical portrait of Anil Relia by Amit Ambalal

